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UNCLAS OUAGADOUGOU 000631

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPKO](#) [MASS](#)

SUBJECT: BURKINA FASO: DEPLOYMENT OF FIRST PKO TROOPS TO  
DARFUR

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: On August 4 Burkina Faso's PKO contingent departed Ouagadougou in route to Darfur. Trained under the ACOTA program, one hundred and thirty four troops boarded a United Nations chartered plane headed for Nyala (South Darfur state) to begin the preparatory stage of their six month long mission. A second contingent will follow on August 11, and the final troop deployment is scheduled to occur in late-September, bringing the total number of Burkinabe peacekeepers in Darfur to 800. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Burkina Faso, an ACOTA training beneficiary, is participating in its first large-scale UN-PKO mission under the hybrid African Union/ United Nations Mission In Darfur (UNAMID) program. Eight hundred troops belonging to the Laafi battalion are scheduled to arrive in Sudan in late September or October. The Battalion will rotate-out with another ACOTA trained Burkinabe battalion (also referred to as Laafi) every six months. The 134 man early-August deployment is the first of three major troop movements from Ouagadougou to Darfur. The second troop movement is scheduled to take place on August 11, and the final movement of about 500 troops should take place September/October and will requires several plane rotations. The Burkinabe troops will be stationed in two places, El Geneina and Foro Bagna in West Darfur. The 800 Burkinabe PKO troops will bring the total of UNAMID personnel on the ground to 13,651 (Note: Among the troops flown to Nyala on August four were two women. End Note.)

¶3. (SBU) The Laafi battalion was summoned to Camp Kamboincin (near Ouagadougou) on August 1 to conclude preparations for the deployment (visas, vaccinations, checking of equipment.) At 1.00 a.m. on August 4, 134 troops and military officials assembled on the tarmac of Ouagadougou International Airport readying for 4.00 a.m. special UN flight (UNO #152) headed for Darfur. Once on the ground in Nyala, a helicopter shuttle service would start to bring troops to El Geneina. The first thirty-five troops were moved on August 4, and the rest on August 5. ACOTA trainers who assisted in the deployment said that despite a four minute delay in boarding the plane, the overall troop and baggage movement had gone very smoothly. The trainers told Embassy officials that moral was high and that the troops were eager to commence their mission. For many, this was their first time leaving Burkinabe territory and for most their first time riding in a plane. The Battalion Commander, Colonel Traore left by commercial aircraft earlier in the week so he could welcome his troops when they touched down in Nyala on August 4.

¶4. (SBU) Earlier, the Chief of Defense LG Dominique Djendjere told the troops that they were pioneers for Burkina Faso: "All of Burkina Faso, the international community and more than anyone, the host country (Sudan) have their eyes riveted on you" he said. His ultimate recommendations to the troops were three-fold: Watch your behavior and your attitudes while in the theater of operations, as Ambassadors of Burkina Faso, you must measure your words and your opinions while abroad, and finally you are the image of Burkina Faso abroad, while in private or out in public behave

accordingly.

15. (SBU) COMMENT: Despite the smooth deployment of troops from Ouagadougou to Nyala, equipment required to set up the two base camps was not deploying with equal ease. After a late order and an even later delivery, some key supplies, such as sewage pipe tubing and electrical cabling had missed the container departure from Tema (Ghana) port in April and hence would have to be transported by the Burkinabe to Nyala at a later day. It is unclear what impact this would have on the set up of the camps. The Burkinabe told us that they were planning on setting up a "channel flight" between Nyala and Ouagadougou every 30-45 days. END COMMENT.  
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